

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5836

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR UR XF SY

SUBJ: GROMYKO'S SPEECH FOR FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM

1. SUMMARY. GROMYKO' DINNER SPEECH FOR SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM APRIL 23, STRIKES US AS A STATEMENT CAREFULLY TAILORED TO PROVIDE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE, WITH AN EYE TO REMOVING OBSTACLES FROM THE PATH TO GENEVA. TO THE ARAB STATES GROMYKO GAVE UNQUALIFIED SOVIET SUPPORT FOR RECOVERY OF ALL LANDS OCCUPIED BY THE ISRAELIS AND PLACED THIS OBJECTIVE FIRST IN SETTING OUT THE MEPC'S GOALS.

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AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE ISARELIS RECEIVED AN UNUSUALLY APECIFIC AND EXPLICIT PROMISE THAT WITHIN THE

CONTEXT OF AN APPROPRIATE SETTLEMENT THE SOVIET UNION WILL BE WILLING TO PROVIDE "THE STRICTEST POSSIBLE GUARANTEES" FOR ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE AND DEVELOPMENT. ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, GROMYKO SOUGHT AN APPARENT MELDING OF CONFLICTING ISRAELI AND ARAB POSITIONS BY REITERATING THE USSR'S SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO "STATEHOOD" AND ENDORSING -- CONSISTENT WITH JOINT LANGUAGE IN THE SOVIET-EGYPTIAN COMMUNIQUE-- PLO PARTICIPATION AT THE MEPC ON AN "EQUAL FOOTING" WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS. HE BALANCED THIS, HOWEVER, BY FUZZING THE QUESTION OF THE TIMING OF PALESTINIAN ATTENDANCE AT THE CONFERENCE, THEREBY APPARENTLY INDICATING SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THIS MATTER. GROMYKO AVOIDED ANY DIRECT REFERENCE TO THE U.S., BUT IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS STRONG PUSH FOR REVIVING THE GENEVA FORUM, HE MADE THE SHARPEST SOVIET ATTACK ON "PARTIAL DEALS (A CLEARLY DEROGATORY TERM)" WE CAN REMEMBER. KHADDAM'S RESPONSE WAS DISTINGUISHED ONLY BY HIS REFUSAL TO MENTION THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, WHICH, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, APPEARED TO SUGGEST THAT DIFFERENCES MAY NOW EXIST BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND SOVIETS OVER THE STRATEGY OF HOW TO PREPARE FOR GENEVA. END SUMMARY.

2. TERRITORIAL QUESTION. GROMYKO NOT SURPRISINGLY WAS UNCOMPROMISING IN SUPPORT OF THE ARAB POSITION ON TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. HE CONDEMNED ISRAEL'S "RULING CIRCLES"--DRAWING AN ANALOGY TO HITLER'S GERMANY CERTAIN TO OFFEND ISRAELI SENSIBILITIES--FOR SEEKING SECURITY THROUGH THE ACQUISITION OF OTHER PEOPLE'S TERRITORY. HE REASSURED HIS SYRIAN AUDIENCE THAT MOSCOW STILL SUPPORTS THE ARAB'S RIGHT TO RECOVER ALL THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (SPECIFICALLY SINGLING OUT THE GOLAN HEIGHTS) AND INSISTED THAT IF ISREAL WANTS PEACE, IT MUST GIVE UP "PLANS" TO ANNEX FOREIGN TERRITORIES. HE FURTHER SOUGHT TO ASSURE HIS ARAB LISTENERS THAT MOSCOW STRESSES THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION AMONG THE PRIORITIES FOR SETTLEMENT BY LISTING FIRST AMONG THE MEPC'S GOALS "AGREEMENT ABOUT THE LIBERATION FORM FOREIGN OCCUPATION
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OF ALL ARAB LANDS."

3. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, GROMYKO ADDRESSED TO ISRAEL THE MOST EXPLICIT PROMISE THAT THE USSR WOULD PARTICIPATE IN GUARANTEEING ISRAELI SECURITY AND EXISTENCE WHICH WE CAN RECALL. ISRAEL, IF IT SO DESIRES, HE SAID CAN RECEIVE THE "STRICTEST POSSIBLE GUARANTEES (SAMYE STROGIYE GARANTII)" WITH THE PARTICIPATION--IN AN APPROPRIATE AGREEMENT -- OF THE USSR. AND AGAIN IN SPEAKING LATER OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE GENEVA CONFER-

ENCE, HE STATED THAT THE USSR BELIEVES ONE OF THE GOALS OF SETTLEMENT MUST BE AGREEMENT ABOUT SECURING AND GUARANTEEING THE RIGHTS OF ALL STATES IN THE ME, "INCLUDING ISRAEL," TO INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE AND DEVELOPMENT.

4. ON THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION GROMYKO'S REMARKS APPEARS TO SEEK A COMPROMISE AND TO AVOID RAISING AN UNBRIDGABLE GAP WITH THE ISRAELIS OVER THE PLO. THUS, WHILE ASSURING THE ARABS AND PALESTINIANS OF MOSCOW'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA AND FOR SECURING PALESTINIAN RIGHTS INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO "STATEHOOD," WITHIN HIS AGENDA FOR GENEVA, HE PUT A PALESTINIAN SETTLEMENT SECOND IN HIS LISTING, SUGGESTING THAT THE DOOR REMAINS OPEN TO A POSSIBLE DELAY OF PLO ATTENDANCE UNTIL A LATER STAGE IN THE MEPC.

5. ON THE TIMING OF GENEVA GROMYKO STRESSED THAT IT SHOULD RESUME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT GAVE EQUAL STRESS TO THE IMPORTANCE OF "SERIOUS PREPARATION" FOR THE CONFERENCE TO ASSURE ITS SUCCESS. HE DID NOT MENTION A SPECIFIC DATE FOR REOPENING THE MEPC.

6. MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT PROCESS. GROMYKO WAS UNCOMPROMISING IN HIS CONDEMNATION OF THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH AND GAVE THE TOUGHEST REMARKS WE HAVE SEEN ON "PARTIAL DEALS" OUTSIDE THE CONTEXT OF A GENERAL SETTLEMENT. HE CHARGED THAT "PARTIAL DEALS" SEPARATED FROM A SOLUTION TO "KEY PROBLEMS" DO NOT BRING A SETTLEMENT CLOSER BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, CREATE ADDITIONAL DIFFICULTIES. MOREOVER, HE SAID, SUCH DEALS CANNOT EASE
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THE ACUTENESS OF THE ME CRISIS BUT RATHER CONTRIBUTE STILL FURTHER TO WORSENING THE SITUATION.

7. KHADDAM'S RESPONSE TO GROMYKO'S STATEMENT APPEARED TO REPRESENT STANDARD SYRIAN RHETORIC ABOUT THE ME SITUATION AND ISRAELI RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT. BUT HIS REMARKS WERE DISTINGUISHED PRIMARILY FOR KHADDAM'S ABSOLUTE REFUSAL TO GROMYKO'S TOAST WHICH DWELT ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON GENEVA, THIS SUGGESTS THAT SOVIETS AND THE SYRIANS MAY, FOR THE MOMENT, BE AT ODDS ON HOW BEST TO APPROACH THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. IT MAY ALSO REFLECT SYRIA'S GROWING SENSITIVITY TO PALESTINIAN INTERESTS IN LINE WITH DAMASCUS' EFFORTS TO ADOPT THE MANTLE OF PALESTINIAN PROTECTOR.

8. COMMENT: SOVIET ME SPECIALIST IGOR BELYAYEV TOLD POLITICAL COUNSELOR APRIL 24 THAT GROMYKO'S REMARKS CONSTITUTED DEFINITIVE STATEMENT ON SOVIET MIDDLE EAST

POLICY. HE SAID (WITHOUT REAL CONVICTION) THAT THE STATEMENT NOW MADE "EVERYTHING CLEAR" REGARDING SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST. AMONG MAIN POINTS HE CITED AS IMPORTANT IN THE STATEMENT, HE SINGLED OUT GROMYKO'S "SPECIFIC REFERENCES" TO ISRAEL AS A "VERY SIGNIFICANT" DEVELOPMENT, BUT HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN OUT FURTHER ON THIS SUBJECT.
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